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ABSTRACT

This study reports twenty-two Hispanic leaders' responses to interviews assessing their perspectives on the nature, prevalence, and causes of poverty among Hispanics. This report contains six parts. Part 1 is an introduction. Part 2 presents the methodology used in the study. Part 3 gives the leaders' demographic and educational backgrounds. Part 4 presents the respondents' views on the nature of poverty among Hispanics today. Part 5 presents their views on current public policies concerning poverty among Hispanics and possible strategies to end it. Part 6 offers the following conclusions: (1) Hispanic institutions can serve a vital role in improving the lives of low-income Hispanics; (2) the issues of importance to these leaders sometimes parallel other national issues, but often with a different emphasis; (3) these Hispanic leaders blend a range of strategies in their approach to poverty; and (4) many of these leaders identified the special challenges facing Latinas. Also included are three appendixes which include the responses to the questions in seven tables, a list of the leaders interviewed, and a list of the advisors for the study. (MYM)

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TWENTY-TWO HISPANIC LEADERS DISCUSS POVERTY

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THE NCLR POVERTY PROJECT

The Poverty Project serves as NCLR's base for information and advocacy regarding Hispanic poverty in the United States. The Project is supported primarily by grants from the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

The Role of the Poverty Project

- **Promoting effective public policies.** The Poverty Project develops reports which analyze, identify, and promote public policies to reduce poverty;
- **Providing issue forums.** The Poverty Project stimulates ideas and interaction by sponsoring discussion roundtables, workshops, and fellowships, and through participation in academic conferences;
- **Cultivating public support and understanding.** The Poverty Project disseminates information to Congress through briefings and testimony; to the media through press conferences and interviews; to local and national organizations through presentations and a quarterly newsletter, and to the general public through articles and editorials.

For more information about NCLR's Poverty Project, contact Julie Quiroz, Senior Policy Analyst, (202) 289-1380, extension 218.

TWENTY-TWO HISPANIC LEADERS DISCUSS POVERTY

Results from the Hispanic Leaders Study

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TWENTY-TWO HISPANIC LEADERS DISCUSS POVERTY

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I. Introduction

More than a quarter of all Hispanics live in poverty, including 37.9% of Hispanic children, 16.1% of Hispanic married-couple families, and 16.2% of families with a working head of household. The prevalence of poverty is a factor in virtually every Hispanic issue, from education to community development, from housing to civil rights. Unfortunately, there is little documentation of the ways Hispanics have worked to end poverty, and few examinations of the institutions, strategies, and leadership which could produce a Hispanic anti-poverty agenda.

The Hispanic Leaders Study was therefore developed to examine one important resource for ending Hispanic poverty: the Hispanic community itself.

The objectives of The Hispanic Leaders Study are to:

(1) Provide a profile of national Hispanic leaders;

(2) Establish a context for developing Hispanic-focused anti-poverty strategies;

(3) Complement problem-focused research with resource-focused research.

The following report includes a description of the way this study was developed and conducted, a summary of the themes which emerged, and a discussion of the study's implications.

II. Methodology

The Selection of Leaders

In May, 1989, thirty national Hispanic leaders were invited to participate in the Hispanic Leaders Study. For the purposes of this study, the definition of "leader" was limited to Members of Congress or directors of national, Hispanic public-interest organizations. Priority was also given to organizations with particularly large constituencies and those which have historically focused on issues affecting low-income Hispanics. These leaders represent national institutions which have been involved in the design, implementation, and administration of efforts to address Hispanic poverty. Of course, there are many other Hispanics leaders, such as those who represent religious, business, or academic affiliations, or the wide range of Hispanics who provide leadership at the state, local, and community level. This study examines just one part of the Hispanic community's broad range of leaders.

The Background Questionnaire and Interview Question Guide

Each leader was asked to provide background information (see "Background Questionnaire", Appendix D) and to participate in an individual, in-depth interview specifically focused on the issue of poverty.

The Background Questionnaire and Interview Question Guide were developed by NCLR staff with assistance from advisors from a range of disciplines. (See "Advisors," Appendix C) Questions were developed with two primary goals:

(1) To develop a profile of national Hispanic leaders, particularly with respect to their experience with poverty and efforts to address it.

(2) To determine the leaders' perspectives regarding:

- **The nature, prevalence, and causes of poverty among Hispanics;**
- **The effectiveness of past and present poverty-focused strategies**
- **Public policy priorities.**

Information from the background questionnaire was designed to be quantified for the Leaders' Profile. However, the interview questions were designed to serve as a general guide for the interviews, not as a survey.

The Interviews

Between May and October 1989, twenty-two of the invited leaders participated in the study. Each interview was conducted by NCLR Senior Policy Analyst Julie Quiroz. All of the interviews were recorded and followed the interview question guide. For a number of reasons, the interviews were not uniform. For example, the length of the interviews ranged from one-half hour to an hour and a half, depending on the leaders' schedules. Moreover, each leader had his or her own focus, meaning that the question order would sometimes vary, additional questions would be added, or irrelevent questions not asked. Finally, because the interviews were conducted over a period of six months, the issues current to each interview varied, sometimes influencing the focus of the interview. In sum, each interview was a unique conversation from which opinions, emotions, and attitudes emerged.

III. Hispanic Leaders Profile

The following section provides a profile of the Hispanic leaders interviewed, including information on:

(1) ***Ethnicity***

(2) ***Current occupation***

(3) ***Sex***

(4) ***Nativity***

(5) ***Educational attainment***

(6) ***Occupational background***

(7) ***Parents' occupational background***

Background information on the overall Hispanic population is also provided.

Profile Summary

Representativeness of Profile. Compared to the Hispanic population overall, this group of leaders was generally representative in terms of ethnic composition, nativity, and parents' occupational background. However, far more of these leaders worked in professional occupations than the overall Hispanic population, far more had professional occupational backgrounds, and a much higher proportion had completed some level of higher education. Hispanic women were seriously underrepresented in this group of leaders compared to their representation in the Hispanic population as a whole.

Ethnicity

Eleven of the Hispanic leaders interviewed were Mexican American. Five were Puerto Rican. One was Central American, one was South American and four were Cuban American.

In 1988, 62.3% of all Hispanics were Mexican American, 12.7% were Puerto Rican, 5.3% were Cuban American, and 11.5% were Central or South American.

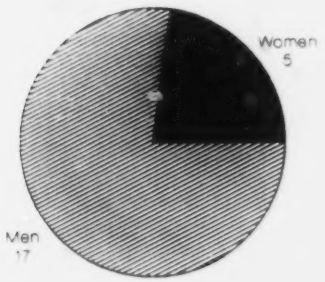
Occupation

Of the Hispanic leaders interviewed, 12 were heads of public interest organizations, 1 headed a trade association, 6 were Members of Congress, one worked with a labor union, one worked in government, and one worked in the private sector.

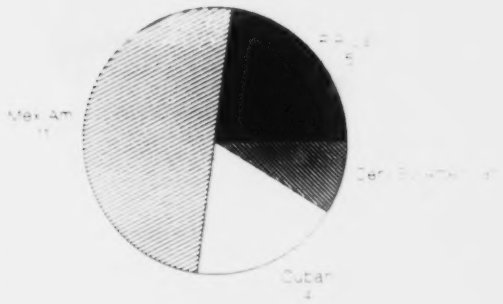
In 1988, only 13.0% of Hispanic men were employed in "managerial" or "professional speciality occupations." Among non-Hispanic men, this proportion was 26.2%. The proportion of Hispanic women employed in managerial or professional speciality positions in 1988 was 15.7%, compared to 25.3% among non-Hispanic women. In 1988, the largest proportion of Hispanic men (28.1%) were employed as "operators, fabricators, and laborers." The largest proportion of Hispanic women (41.1%) were employed in "technical, sales, and administrative support positions."

Sex

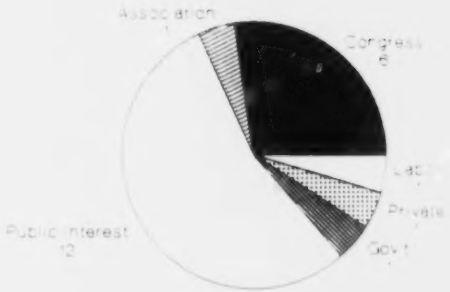
Hispanic Leaders: Sex



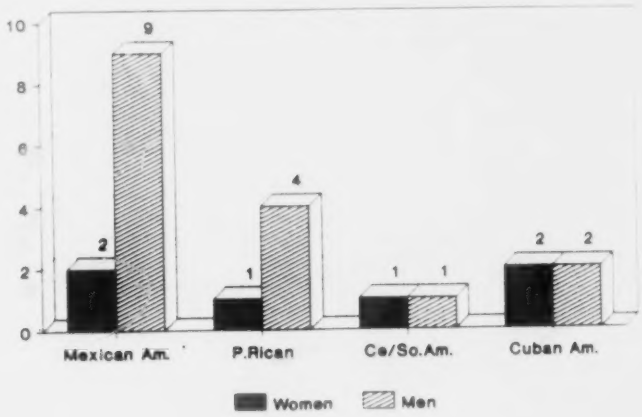
Hispanic Leaders: Ethnicity



Hispanic Leaders: Current Occupation



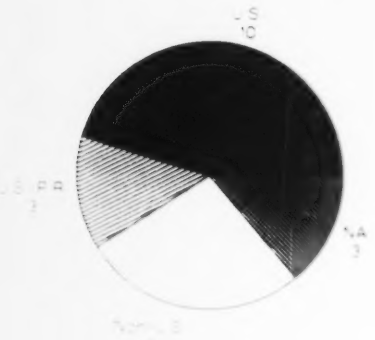
Sex: By Subgroup



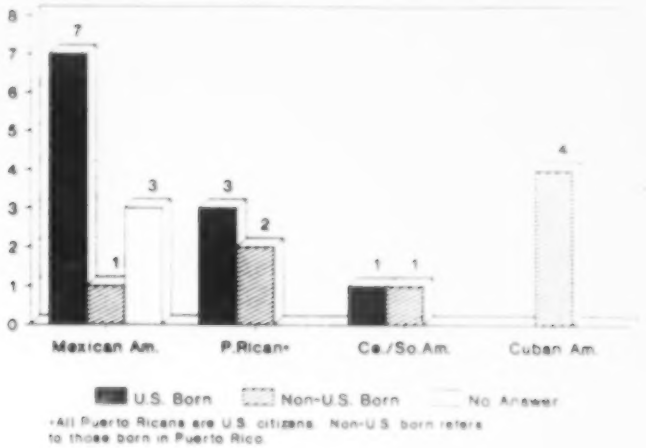
Six of the Hispanic leaders interviewed were women; 17 were men. In 1988, among Hispanics overall, women made up 49.8% of the population and men made up 50.2%.

Nativity

Hispanic Leaders: Nativity



Nativity: By Subgroup

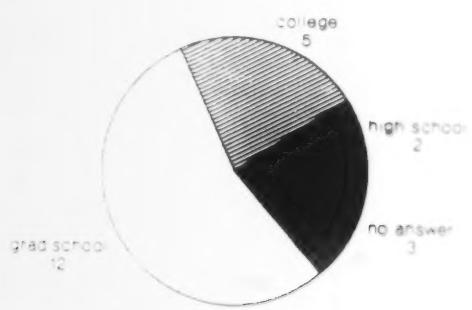


Fourteen of the Hispanic leaders interviewed were born in the United States, 10 in the mainland U.S. and 3 on the island of Puerto Rico. Six of the leaders were born outside the United States. For two leaders, nativity information was not available.

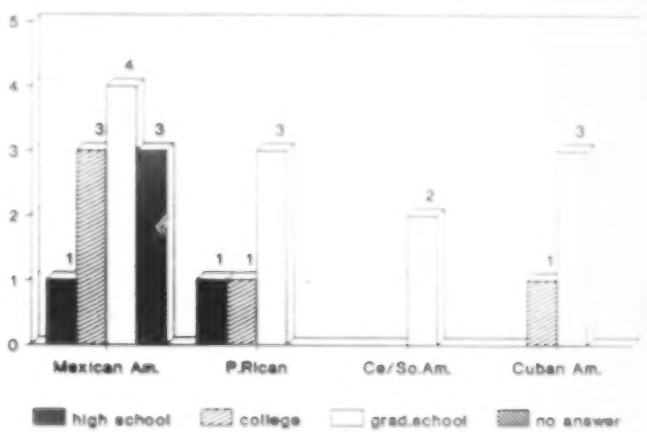
In 1980, the last year for which such information is available, about two-thirds of all Hispanics were born in the United States. Twenty-six percent of Mexican Americans, 77% of Cuban Americans, 80% of Central and South Americans, and 17% of Other Hispanics were foreign-born.

Educational Attainment

Hispanic Leaders: Educational Attainment



Educational Attainment By Subgroup

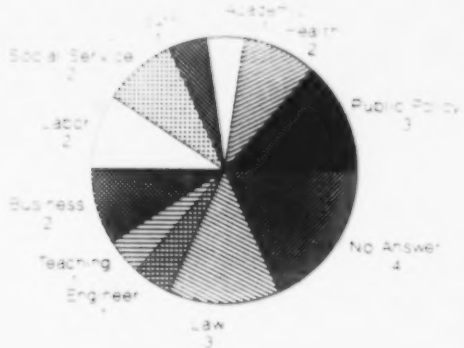


Seventeen of these leaders completed college or graduate school. Two have completed high school. For three, information on educational attainment was not available.

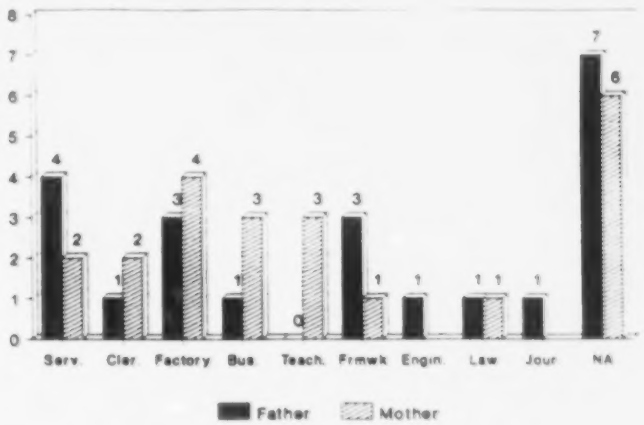
In 1988, only 52% of Hispanics aged 25 years or older had completed 4 years of high school or more, compared to 78.2% of the non-Hispanic population. Only 12.0% of Hispanics had completed 4 years of college or more, compared to 24.9% of the non-Hispanic population.

Leaders' Occupational Background and Parents' Occupational Background

Hispanic Leaders:Occupational Background



Hispanic Leaders: Parents' Occupations



These Hispanic leaders came from a wide range of backgrounds. Three began their careers in public policy, 3 in law, 2 in the field of health, 2 in social services, 2 in labor and labor unions, 2 in business, 1 in academia, 1 in teaching, 1 in journalism, and 1 as an engineer. Occupational background information was not available from 4 of the leaders.

Among the mothers of these leaders, 4 worked in factories, 2 worked in service occupations, 2 held clerical jobs, 3 worked in business, 3 were teachers, 1 was a farmworker, and 1 was a lawyer. Information on mother's occupational background was not available from 6 of the leaders.

Among the fathers of these leaders, 4 worked in service occupations, 1 worked as an office clerk, 3 worked in factories or manufacturing, 1 worked in business, 3 were farmworkers, 1 was an engineer, 1 was a lawyer, and 1 was a journalist. For 7 of these leaders, this information was not available.

IV. Interviews: Poverty Among Hispanics

All of the leaders were asked to discuss their observations with regard to poverty among Hispanics. In this section, responses to the following questions are presented:

(1) ***Has poverty among Hispanics grown, diminished, or stayed at the same level?***

(2) ***Has the nature of poverty among Hispanics changed?***

(3) ***Is persistent poverty a significant issue for Hispanics?***

(4) ***Is Hispanic poverty unique?***

(5) ***What are the primary causes of poverty among Hispanics?***

Interviews Summary: Poverty Among Hispanics

Growth of Poverty. Most of these leaders were concerned that poverty is growing. Their concerns about poverty appear to blend a more established poverty agenda with additional, less recognized concerns. For example, there has been some national attention (if not action) regarding poverty among children, funding for federal social programs, disparity between the rich and poor, and wages not keeping pace with inflation. However, some of the issues raised by these leaders have not attracted as much national attention: disproportionate impact of economic changes on Hispanics' employment opportunities, the drop in the proportion of Hispanics attending college, the dramatic rise in poverty among Puerto Ricans, the special problems of the Hispanic elderly, of foreign-born Hispanics, and of Hispanics living in Mexico border communities.

Changing Nature of Poverty. Only about half of these leaders felt that the nature of poverty has changed. Of these, five defined this change with respect to economic, demographic, and public policy changes; four saw a worsening self-perception of poor people themselves; two felt that dangers such as crime and drugs had made the impact of poverty more damaging; one saw more strategic organizing by the poor and more apathy among the non-poor; and, one felt that self-perception among the poor had worsened along with their economic circumstances.

Persistent Poverty, Uniqueness of Hispanic Poverty. The majority of the Hispanic leaders interviewed were not specifically focused on "persistent" poverty: one re-defined persistence in terms of persistent employment disadvantage rather than length of time in poverty, one felt that persistence was actually a turn-over in recent immigrants, and ten did not know or did not specifically address the issue. Four of the ten who considered persistent poverty a significant issue spoke of an "underclass," two emphasized the persistence of poverty among the working poor, and four did not elaborate on their positions. The majority of these leaders did not express an opinion as to whether Hispanic poverty is unique.

Causes of Poverty. The majority of these leaders felt that external, structural forces were the primary cause of poverty among Hispanics, (e.g., lack of educational opportunities, lack of jobs, racism and discrimination, and overall inequities of the U.S. economic system). Two felt that the primary causes of Hispanic poverty were external forces combined with subsequent internal problems: for example, discrimination combined with family disruption.

(1) Has Poverty Among Hispanics Grown, Diminished, or Stayed at the Same Level?

- Eighteen of these 22 leaders believed poverty among Hispanics is growing; three believed its prevalence has remained the same; one did not specifically address this question.

- Fourteen of the 16 Mexican American and Puerto Rican leaders believe poverty among Hispanics has grown, as did the Central and South American leaders. Among the four Cuban American leaders, only two were foreign-born believed poverty has worsened. Two Cuban Americans and one Puerto Rican felt poverty among Hispanics has remained at a constant level.

- The 18 leaders who felt Hispanic poverty has grown supported their opinions with a range of evidence.

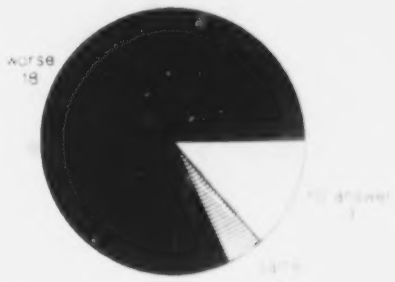
  - Nine pointed to poverty among specific segments of the Hispanic population: children, the elderly, recent immigrants, Puerto Ricans, and Hispanics living in *colonias;*

  - Five saw the trend in Hispanic poverty as related to larger economic trends: an overall growth in poverty in the U.S. including Hispanics; a growing disparity between the rich and poor; Hispanics not keeping pace with changing economic opportunities; and, wages not keeping pace with inflation.

  - One leader pointed to greater hardship caused by reductions in government social program spending, and another to the drop in the proportion of Hispanics attending college.

  - Two did not cite specific evidence.

Total



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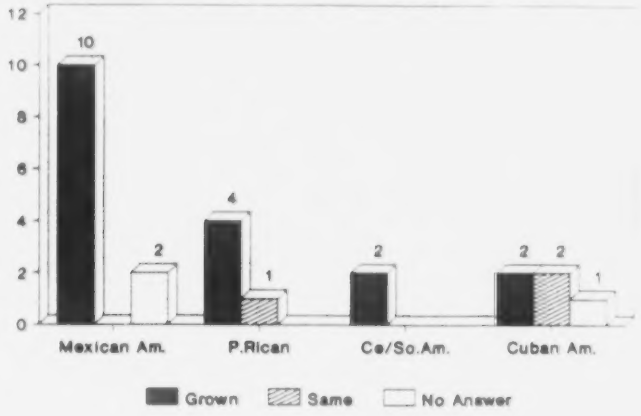

Excerpts:

When I was young, it took my family five years to get out of poverty, and my mother was working two and three jobs. One of the main reasons we escaped poverty was that I got a scholarship. Those kinds of scholarships have now practically dried up.

-- Albert Jacquez

Poverty is getting worse, in part because it's more concentrated. When I was in high school, 40 percent of the students were Puerto Rican and that was the highest for any public school. Now there are 100 public schools that are over 90 percent Puerto Rican. The concentration of need is also getting worse.

-- Louis Nunez

Education continues to be one of the better exit points out of poverty. But federal financial aid programs and student assistance have been reduced and we're paying the price as a community.

-- Jose Longoria

(2) Has the nature of poverty among Hispanics changed?

- Thirteen of the 22 leaders believed that the nature of poverty has changed; three did not; two did not know; and four did not specifically address this question.

- Ten of the 16 Mexican American and Puerto Rican leaders felt there has been a change; six of these eleven either did not know or did not specifically address the question.

- Of the four Cuban Americans interviewed, three believed there has been no change in the nature of poverty.

- Four of the leaders who believed the nature of poverty has changed pointed to low-income Hispanics' growing self-perception as poor.

- Three discussed changes related to specific public policies: hardship caused by cut-backs in social programs, problems for undocumented workers as a result of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), and deterioration and increased segregation of public schools.

- Two cited both changes in the attitudes of the poor and changes in the society overall: one pointed to greater apathy among the non-poor combined with greater realism and self-reliance among the poor; another felt that economic changes have created more barriers against the poor escaping poverty, combined with the poor experiencing despair at not seeing progress.

- Two leaders felt that the poor experience greater danger now than in the past, such as violence and drugs. Both of the leaders who voiced this opinion also believed that violence and drugs are increasing problems for the society as a whole, and are not limited to the poor.

- One leader argued that the poor are experiencing greater employment difficulties related to the changing structure of the U.S. economy.

- One pointed to the fact that poverty is increasingly an experience of children.

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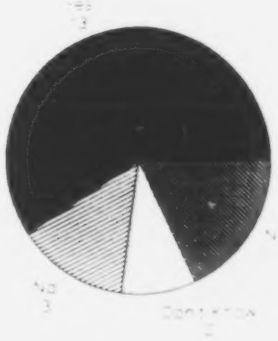

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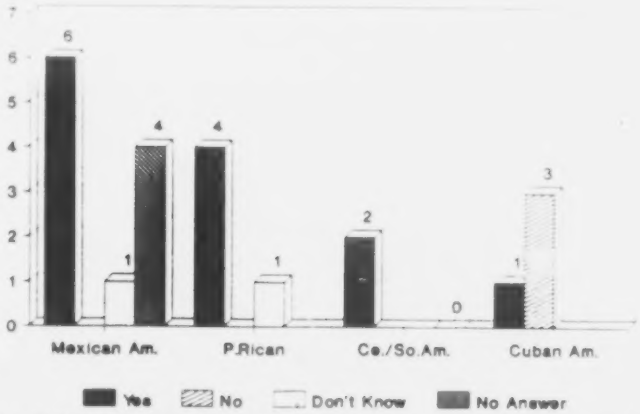

Excerpts:

Why has the area where I grew up gotten worse? I can't say there are no job opportunities, but the jobs available are low-paying jobs with no benefits, no opportunities to advance. And there are a lot more drugs -- sale and use. But I don't think it's because the middle class has left. I've never known the Hispanic middle class to live in the barrio.

– Albert Jacquez

The trend of single parenthood is not just continuing, it's blossoming. Some single mothers do a fine job, but the odds are very tough.

-- Ruben Franco

There's a growing poverty of the spirit. It mirrors the society as a whole. But, it's the people at the bottom who are less able to deal with it.

-- Raul Yzaguirre

The burden of breaking the cycle of poverty has been put on the woman.

– Hector Velasquez

We have to approach poverty with an understanding of today's economy. The reality is that a worker may need to be retrained two or three times in a lifetime. This is critical for Hispanics being left behind by the changing economy.

-- Antonia Hernandez

For the impoverished Puerto Rican who leaves the island and comes to the mainland, there's more isolation, more fearfulness, less stable, established communities.

– Janice Petrovich

(3) Is Persistent Poverty A Significant Issue for Hispanics?

- The majority of the Hispanic leaders interviewed were not specifically focused on "persistent poverty." When asked if "persistent poverty" was a serious problem among Hispanics, 10 leaders felt it was and 2 felt it was not.
- Ten either felt they did not know or did not specifically address this question. Several of these 10 indicated that the distinction between poverty and persistent poverty was a "research issue" for which there was no information on which to base an opinion.
- Of the 10 leaders who believed persistent poverty is a serious problem for Hispanics six were Mexican American three were Puerto Rican, and one was South American. Both of the leaders who felt that it is not a serious problem were Mexican American. None of the Cuban American leaders specifically addressed this question.
- The three leaders most concerned with persistent poverty were Puerto Rican, with all three emphasizing the development of an "underclass" or a "whole class of people not moving up." One of the Mexican American leaders felt persistent poverty was a particularly large issue for Puerto Ricans.
- Two of the Mexican American leaders who felt persistent poverty was a serious problem emphasized lack of options and supports for the "working poor." Of the two Mexican Americans who did not believe persistent poverty was serious issue, one felt that persistent problems of the working poor were a larger issue, and one felt that "persistent poverty" was primarily the turnover of very poor recent immigrants.

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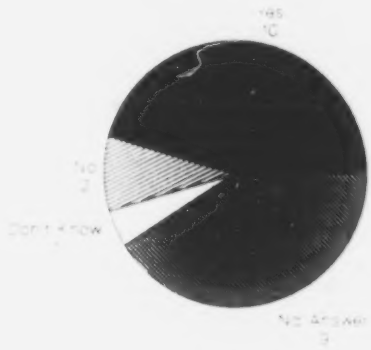

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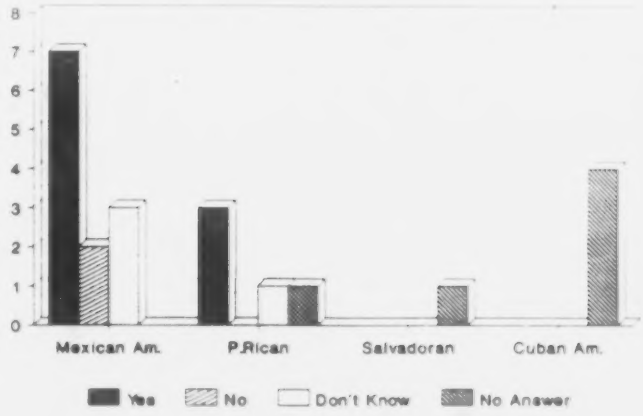


Excerpts:

A great many of the people I knew when I was young were poor; their parents were poor. I see them now: they're poor, their children are poor, their grandchildren are poor. Many kids are born without a chance in the world and they know it.

-- Ruben Franco

There is persistent poverty by design, to keep a certain class of people in a syndrome of poverty, to serve a purpose in an economic society that exploits in order to make a profit. As long as there's no major turmoil -- the fields aren't being burned, the factories aren't being seized, or businesses aren't under the gun from some federal agency -- things will continue in that vein.

-- Congressman Torres

There are three categories of the poor; the upwardly mobile poor, the "underclass" -- those who for whom current interventions don't seem to work; and those who fall in the middle -- those who can be helped by intervention.

-- Louis Nunez

I'm a researcher and I think it is important to look at questions like "Is there persistent poverty?" But, you can continue to do that for a long time and find all sorts of little nuances. But what you need to find are places where things are actually being done.

-- Janice Petrovich

The percentage of immigrants coming in is insubstantial compared to the overall Hispanic population. Poverty is a domestic problem.

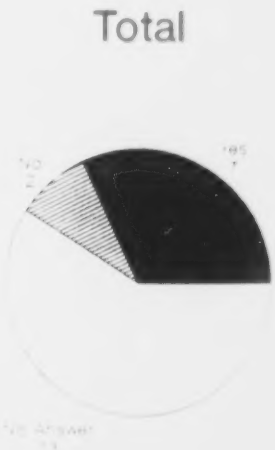
-- Antonia Hernandez

(4) Is Hispanic poverty unique?

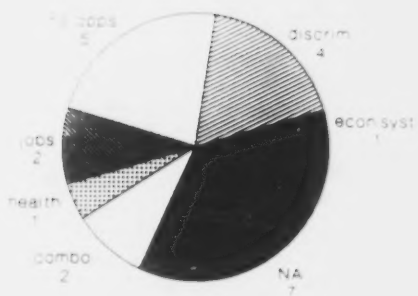
. The majority (13) of these leaders did not address the question of whether Hispanic poverty is unique.

. Two felt it was definitely not unique, arguing that "poverty is poverty."

. Among the seven who felt Hispanic poverty had unique features, none felt that these unique features outweighed commonalities. The features pointed to by these eight were: immigration (3), Puerto Rican migration (1), difficulties caused by legal status stipulations (1), language issues (1), cultural differences (1), and, the diversity of the Hispanic Population (1).



(5) What are the primary causes of poverty among Hispanics?



. seven leaders did not point to one primary cause of poverty.

. Five leaders defined the primary cause of poverty as of lack of opportunities, particularly educational opportunities.

. Two focused on jobs: lack of jobs and loss of jobs due to changes in the economy.

. Four pointed to racism and discrimination.

. One focused on inequities in the overall economic structure.

. One leader focused on poor health and poor health care.

. Two leaders stressed a combination of factors: lack of resources combined with lack of leadership; displacement from another country combined with segregation, discrimination, and the breakdown in informal and formal support systems.

Excerpts:

The problems of underpriveleged students don't tend to be psychological or intellectual. Their problems are rooted in family disorganization, dysfunctional schools, and lack of role models.

-- Guarione Diaz

Basically you're born into poverty. Your parents are poor and discrimination perpetuates that poverty.

-- Raul Yzaguirre

Health problems are a major reason for poverty. If you haven't got your health, you can't work, you can't take care of your family.

-- Jane Delgado

Single mothers don't have enough schooling to get a high enough paying job to pay for child care, so welfare is one of the only ways they can somewhat feed themselves and their children.

-- Janice Petrovich

Latinas are the most vulnerable because of the sexism of our social institutions. Latinas are entering the labor force, but are not becoming economically independent and stable. There is the stereotype that Hispanics are family-oriented; I value the stereotype, but for women, I wonder how real it is. We can't lull ourselves into believing that there are no problems there.

-- Antonia Hernandez

V. Interviews: Poverty And Public Policies

Each leader was asked to discuss public policies for addressing poverty among Hispanics. In the following section, responses to the following questions are presented:

(1) What past strategy do you consider significant?

(2) What is the highest public policy priority for addressing poverty among Hispanics?

(3) What current action do you consider promising?

Interviews Summary: Poverty And Public Policies

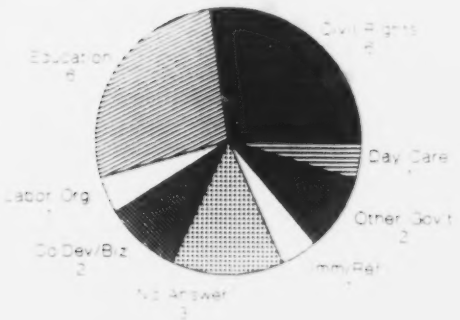
Past Strategies. Six of these leaders pointed to civil rights strategies that had been beneficial to low-income Hispanics. Six cited past education-focused strategies. Other effective past strategies discussed included community and small business development, labor organizing, Medicaid, and programs developed under the Office of Economic Opportunity. There was a strong emphasis on community-based strategies echoed in many of the interviews.

Public Policy Priorities. The majority of the leaders felt that education was a top public policy priority. Other priority issue areas included increased political representation, the quality and affordability of health care, re-designed social programs, re-distribution of wealth, and community development.

Promising Current Action. Four leaders felt there were current education strategies which showed promise for the future. Three were encouraged by potential changes in social programs. Three felt that political and social organizing held the most promise. Two pointed to tax reform strategies, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, as well as attempts to target employment and training programs.

(1) What past strategy do you consider significant?

Past Strategies



Six of these leaders pointed to civil rights strategies that have been beneficial to low-income Hispanics. Of these six, one pointed to affirmative action, another to the bilingual provisions of the Voting Rights Act. Four discussed civil rights strategies in combination with other action: civil rights and Head Start; civil rights, voting rights, minimum wage, Job Corps, and federal aid to education; civil rights and the GI Bill; civil rights and the bilingual education act. One of these four also felt that federal social programs had not been designed to address the specific needs of Hispanics.

Six leaders discussed past education-related strategies which they found beneficial. Two discussed their work with ASPIRA; two focused on Head Start; one felt that the English Proficiency Act had been important; one discussed the establishment of an alternative high school for Hispanic drop-outs. Of those who discussed education, one also felt that federal social programs had not been designed to address Hispanic needs.

Two leaders discussed strategies involving community and small business development.

One leader felt past labor organizing efforts had been beneficial for low-income Hispanics.

One pointed to the establishment of community day care centers for Hispanic children.

One leader focused primarily on the disadvantages caused by U.S. foreign policy and immigration and refugee status legislation.

One felt the establishment of Medicaid had been a major benefit to low-income Hispanics.

Another discussed community-based programs developed under the Office of Economic Opportunity. This leader also felt that federal social programs were not necessarily suited to Hispanics.

Three leaders did not specifically address this question.

Excerpts:

A few years back, some of us thought Head Start was a program that was "taking our kids away" because they didn't trust or agree with how we raise children. As it has turned out, this has been a very successful program.

One of our biggest movements in the Seventies was to get open admissions policies at community colleges. It was a worthy goal, but we needed to focus more on setting standards in order for our own community to be tough and realistic about what our kids need to succeed. Access is only half the story.

-- Ruben Franco

The bilingual education act was an important victory, not just because of what it did programmatically, but because of what it represented: a successful campaign led by Hispanics, for Hispanics, around a major piece of legislation.

Income-focused strategies have helped a lot of people. But income transfer programs are a one-time opportunity that only lasts as long as the program.

-- Jose Longoria

When I came to work at OEO's Migrant Division, we had the funding, the legislative authority, and the freedom to be creative, to make real changes. We helped establish community-based institutions that are still in existence today; we helped pass wage and hour reforms; we cultivated leadership. OEO provided us with fertile ground.

-- Raul Yzaguirre

My economic situation improved because I worked union. I was able to get jobs that paid better than minimum wage. Together with my peers we formed an association to protect ourselves against employer greed.

-- Jack Otero

ASPIRA has been extremely successful in developing young Puerto Rican leaders. I see former "aspirantes" in important positions everywhere.

-- Louis Nunez

Government subsidies in education, housing, and other areas have helped

move some Hispanics into the middle class. People seem to be ashamed of remembering that.

-- Congressman Bustamante

Some of our past community development projects have produced strong economic and political power, but not for very many people. If I had to do it over again, I'd find a way to have people working in a truly cooperative arrangement, real ownership of capital, land, and dwellings, participants in the cash flow.

While I believe in the labor movement, it has its shortcomings. Labor unions have allowed themselves to be self-serving, to only deal with their immediate constituency. To this day, with only a few exceptions, labor doesn't have relevent Hispanics in its leadership, even though we're the fastest growing part of the labor force.

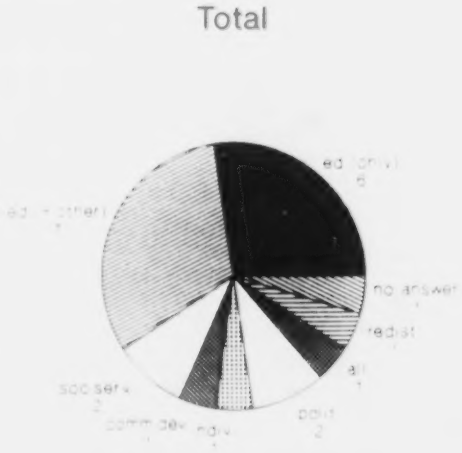
-- Congressman Torres

U.S. foreign policy and IRCA have been very bad policies for Central Americans.

-- Silvia Rosales

(2) What is the highest public policy priority for ending poverty among Hispanics?

- The majority of the leaders (13) felt that education was a top public policy priority. Of these 13, six mentioned education in combination with other priorities such as legal status problems, child care, housing, non-welfare strategies, and government job-creation; seven singled out education.
- Two leaders focused on social service issues: health care and re-designing social programs to better suit Hispanic needs.
- One leader focused on community development.
- Two leaders felt that overall politicization of Hispanics was critical.
- Another leader felt that efforts to foster individual self-esteem and job creation were central.
- One leader argued that there is no one priority, that efforts need to be made in a wide range of areas.
- One leader believed that redistribution of wealth was the highest priority.
- One leader did not single out a priority issue area.



Excerpts:

The first thing we have to do is to politicize the Hispanic community. Everything else is secondary. Once we have the power of the vote, then someone who is bold enough will have a base.

-- Jose Longoria

Stop putting money into research and start putting it into services.

-- Congressman Martinez

Ninety percent of poor Hispanics are willing to volunteer for employment and training programs. I could expand our program ten-fold and still have enough volunteers. If we could start helping those ninety percent, the hard-core ten percent would be better off.

-- Hector Velasquez

National Hispanic organizations should recognize that the lack of opportunities facing recent immigrants is the same as that facing native-born Hispanics -- poor education, homelessness, overcrowding. Central Americans can contribute to a national Hispanic agenda because we are as focused on "bread and butter" issues as we are on assimilation.

-- Silvia Rosales

We need to put more resources into what we already know works.

-- Harry Pachon

Redistribution of income is the main thing we have to do, even though I don't think it will happen soon. By income distribution I don't mean social programs, I mean banking, taxation, and a whole range of strategies.

-- Congressman Torres

(3) What current action do you consider promising?

- Four leaders felt there were current education strategies which showed promise for the future: one pointed to Hispanics' increased attention to education; one to overall national attention to education and child care, as well as individual mentoring programs; another felt that ASPIRA continues to provide a successful model; another felt that recognition and increased funding of Head Start represented a positive trend.

- Three leaders focused on social programs: one saw promise in attention focused away from income supplement strategies; another was encouraged by the development of comprehensive, case management services; another felt that the move toward targeting the most disadvantaged was important, and also emphasized the growth of Hispanic entrepreneurial strategies.

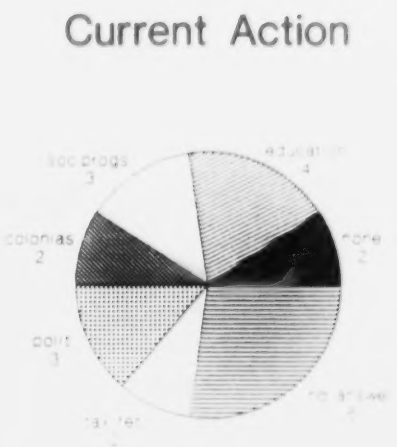
- Three leaders saw recognition of political and social organizing as a hopeful sign: two of these three focused on political representation, one on community self-help organizing.

- Two Mexican American leaders felt that recent *colonias* legislation was a positive step.

- Two pointed to tax reform strategies, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, in addition to other emerging strategies: one mentioned tax reform efforts as well as the *Edgewood* school finance decision and increased targeting in the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA); another felt that tax reform efforts, efforts to eliminate redlining practices, and small business development were the most positive directions currently unfolding.

- Two leaders, both Puerto Rican, did not see any current action they considered promising.

- Six leaders did not specifically address this question.



Excerpts:

This country is finally starting to recognize that welfare is not our primary tool for addressing poverty. Lack of access to decent jobs is the real issue.

-- Raul Yzaguirre

I'm glad to see attention being focused on children.

-- Harry Pachon

We're going to have to raise taxes.

-- Guarione Diaz

Everyone today is talking about involvement. ASPIRA was doing that 20 years ago. Everyone today is talking about leadership development. ASPIRA's been doing that too.

-- Janice Petrovich

There will always be an underclass. The health of our nation is determined by how large that group is.

-- Jose Longoria

The biggest challenges to this nation are going to be facing a changing economy and changing infrastructure, and redirecting education. Those challenges cross all colors and all sectors.

-- Antonia Hernandez

In the national Congress you will not have a "Hispanic" bill, solely and purely for Hispanics.

-- Congressman de la Garza

Central American organizations can make three primary contributions to a national Hispanic agenda: we can help them remember their roots, we can encourage them to challenge structures, and we can provide an international perspective.

-- Silvia Rosales

VI. Conclusion

When the War on Poverty began in the 1960s, Hispanics received little attention. Now, in the 1990s, the economic challenges facing Hispanics are beginning to be recognized, if not addressed.

This study was based on the idea that Hispanics must participate in their own agenda-setting. While this study suggests that a specific Hispanic agenda for ending poverty is not yet a reality, this study calls attention to Hispanics' capacity to lead, influence, and participate in efforts to improve the economic opportunities of their communities in the United States.

Based on this study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- **Hispanic institutions can serve a vital role in improving the lives of low-income Hispanics.** At the local, state, and national level, Hispanics have developed unique institutions and networks. As this study demonstrates, these institutions have provided a structure for addressing Hispanic issues, even when those issues were not at the forefront of other agendas. Examples cited by these leaders include the bilingual provisions of the Voting Rights Act, the bilingual education act, and the establishment of Hispanic institutions and programs for community development, education, labor organizing, and day care.

- **The issues of importance to these leaders sometimes parallel other national issues, but often with a different emphasis.** For example, improving education was a central issue for these leaders; but, as several leaders argued, improvement efforts need to recognize specific Hispanic educational needs and involve Hispanics in decision-making. These leaders were also working to improve Hispanics' economic self-sufficiency, but were focused more on employment opportunities and benefits than welfare policies. These leaders also raised issues which are of particular concern to Hispanics, such as the disproportionate impact of economic changes on Hispanics' employment opportunities; the drop in the proportion of Hispanics attending college; the dramatic rise in poverty among Puerto Ricans; and the unique problems of the Hispanic elderly, of foreign-born Hispanics, and of Hispanics in Mexico border communities.

- **These Hispanic leaders blend a range of strategies in their approach to poverty.** These leaders did not define an "anti-poverty" strategy in terms of social service programs solely, but as a multi-dimensional strategy blending efforts in education, civil rights, political power, taxation, employment policy, and others. Perhaps in part because these leaders are focused on Hispanics -- not just officially poor Hispanics -- they appear to maintain comprehensive perspectives. Most of these leaders also did not categorize the Hispanic poor into segments such as "the under-class" or "the persistently poor," but sought to identify and eliminate common disadvantages.

- **Many of these leaders identified the special challenges facing Latinas.** At the national level, however, Latinas remain underrepresented in the Hispanic leadership, and are often under represented in women's leadership. Women's issues may come to play an increasingly large role in a Hispanic agenda for addressing poverty.

As many of these leaders suggested, the challenge of the 1990s will not be the inclusion of Hispanics in defining problems, but inclusion of Hispanics in defining solutions.

Appendix A: Detailed Tables

VI. Appendix A: Detailed Responses

Has poverty among Hispanics grown, diminished or stayed at the same level?

MEXICAN AMERICAN	PUERTO RICAN	CENTRAL/SOUTH AMERICAN	CUBAN
(11)	(5)	(2)	(4)
Grown = 10 evidence: . poverty among elderly . not kept pace with other populations . more poor overall, including Hispanics . greater disparity between rich and poor (2) . poverty among immigrants . poverty in colonias . wages have not kept pace . no specific evidence (2)	**Grown = 4** evidence: . Puerto Rican crisis . some are trapped in poverty -- issue sometimes clouded by influx of newcomers . Reagan budget cuts; homelessness . Puerto Ricans objectively at bottom and growing self-perception of being at bottom	**Grown = 2** evidence: . particularly situation of undocumented . poverty among children	**Grown = 2** evidence: . proportion of Hispanics in college has leveled off
Same = 0	**Same = 1**	**Same = 0**	**Same = 2**
No Answer = 1	**No Answer = 0**	**No Answer = 0**	**No Answer = 0**

Has the nature of poverty among Hispanics changed?

MEXICAN AMERICAN	PUERTO RICAN	CENTRAL/SOUTH AMERICAN	CUBAN
(11)	(5)	(2)	(4)
Yes = 6 evidence . growing self-perception as poor (2) . apathy of non-poor; less government support; greater realism and self-reliance of poor . violence, drugs, gangs (2) -- specified that these were not unique to the poor, reflect changes in society overall . difficulties presented by changing economy	**Yes = 4** evidence: . collapse/increased segregation of public schools . growing self-perception as poor . escape was easier in past; despair at not seeing progress . cut-backs in social programs	**Yes = 2** evidence: . lack of documentation a larger barrier to economic security . increasingly an experience of children	**Yes = 1** evidence: . growing self-perception as poor
Don't Know = 1	**Don't Know = 1**	**Don't Know = 0**	**Don't Know = 0**
No Answer = 4	**No Answer = 0**	**No Answer = 0**	**No Answer = 0** **No = 3**

Is Hispanic poverty unique?

MEXICAN AMERICAN	PUERTO RICAN	CENTRAL/SOUTH AMERICAN	CUBAN
(11)	(5)	(2)	(4)
Yes = 2 reason: . immigration . culture	**Yes = 2** reason: . language . migration	**Yes = 1** reason: . citizenship status issues	**Yes = 2** reason: . immigration . diversity of population
No = 1	**No = 1**	**No = 0**	**No = 0**
No Answer = 8	**No Answer = 2**	**No Answer = 1**	**No Answer = 2**

What are the primary causes of poverty among Hispanics?

MEXICAN AMERICAN	PUERTO RICAN	CENTRAL/SOUTH AMERICAN	CUBAN
(11)	(5)	(1)	(4)
Answer = 8 cause: . lack of education opportunities; lack of unity . racism (2) . poverty among parents perpetuated by discrimination . lack of opportunities . lack of educational opportunities; lack of affordable day care . lack of resources; lack of leadership . lack of jobs	**Answer = 3** cause: . lack of education opportunities . increasing cost of living; loss of jobs . lack of opportunities; lack of support systems for newcomers	**Answer = 1** cause: . economic system	**Answer = 3** cause: . displacement from another country; segregation/discrimination; breakdown in support systems . poor health/health care . discrimination/education
No Answer = 3	**No Answer = 2**	**No Answer = 1**	**No Answer = 1**

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What is the highest public policy priority for ending poverty among Hispanics?

MEXICAN AMERICAN	PUERTO RICAN	CENTRAL/SOUTH AMERICAN	CUBAN
(11)	(5)	(2)	(4)
Education = 6	**Education = 4**	**Education = 1**	**Education = 1**
. education and job creation	. education (2)	. education, particularly young children	**Social Services = 2**
. education (3)	. education, housing, employment and training, family learning centers	**Education and Legalization = 1**	. re-designing social programs to fit Hispanic needs, raising taxes, non-government strategies
. education and day care	. education, housing, government spending for jobs	. amnesty and support services, education	. quality, affordable health care = 1
. education and strategies not focused on welfare	**Self-esteem, job creation = 1**		**Increasing political representation = 1**
Redistribution of Wealth = 1			
. tax reform, elimination of redlining, etc.			
Community Development = 1			
. aid to *colonias*			
Politicization = 1			
Everything = 1			
No Answer = 1	**No Answer = 0**		**No Answer = 1**

What past action do you consider significant?

MEXICAN AMERICAN (11)	PUERTO RICAN (5)	CENTRAL/SOUTH AMERICAN (2)	CUBAN (4)
Civil Rights = 1	**Civil Rights = 1**	Immigration/Refugee Issues = 1	Civil Rights (and other) = 1
. voting rights act	. affirmative action	Education = 1	. civil rights, voting rights, minimum wage, Job Corps, federal aid to education
Civil Rights/Education = 2	**Civil Rights/Education = 1**	. Head Start	Day Care = 1
. civil rights, GI bill	. civil rights, head start		. establishing local day care centers
. voting rights act, bilingual education act			Medicaid = 1
Education = 2	**Education = 2**		Education/Gov't Programs = 1
. Head Start (1)	. ASPIRA (2)		. establishing alternative high school for drop outs; gov't social programs have not been designed for Hispanics
. English Proficiency Act	**Community Development = 1**		
Labor Organizing = 1			
Office Economic Opportunity Programs = 1			
Small Business Legislation = 1			
No Answer = 3			
Don't Know = 1		Don't Know = 0	
		No Answer = 0	

What current action do you consider promising?

MEXICAN AMERICAN	PUERTO RICAN	CENTRAL/SOUTH AMERICAN	CUBAN
(11)	(5)	(2)	(4)
Education = 2 . Hispanics' increasing focus on education . increasing attention to education, day care; development of mentoring programs	**Education = 1** . ASPIRA **Social Programs = 1** . development of comprehensive, case management services	Self-Help Organizing = 1 . increased funding for Head Start	Social Programs = 1 targeting the most disadvantaged, developing entreprenurial activities
Social Programs = 1 . shifting away from income supplements			Politicization = 1
Aid to Colonias = 2			
Politicization = 1			
Tax Reform = 2 . tax reform, *Edgewood* decision, changes in JTPA . tax reform, elimination of redlining practices, small business development			
	None = 2	Don't Know = 1	
No Answer = 3	**No Answer = 1**	No Answer = 0	No Answer = 2

Appendix B: List of Leaders

Appendix B: List of Leaders

Congressman Albert G. Bustamante

Congressman E. (Kika) de la Garza

Jane Delgado
Executive Director
National Coalition of Hispanic Health and Human Services Organizations

Guarione Diaz
Executive Director
Cuban American National Council

Mario Diaz
National Chairman
American GI Forum of the United States

Ruben Franco
President and General Counsel
Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund

Congressman Robert Garcia

Albert J. Jacquez
President
Latin American Manufacturers Association

Antonia Hernandez
President and General Counsel
Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund

Jose Longoria
Executive Director
National Educational Service Centers, League of United Latin American Citizens

Irma Maldonado
President
Mexican American Women's National Association

Congressman Matthew G. Martinez

Louis Nunez
President
National Puerto Rican Coalition

Congressman Solomon P. Ortiz

Jack F. Otero
President
Labor Counsel for Latin American Advancement

Harry Pachon
Executive Director
National Associationo of Latino Elected Officials

Ana Maria Perera
National Association of Cuban American Women

Janice Petrovich
President
ASPIRA of America

Silvia Rosales
Executive Director
Central American Refugee Center

Congressman Esteban Torres

Hector Velasquez
President
National Puerto Rican Forum

Raul Yzaguirre
President and CEO
National Council of La Raza

Appendix C: Advisors

Appendix C: Advisors

The following people provided invaluable comments and suggestions during the development of the interview discussion guide and background questionnaire.

Gloria Bonilla-Santiago
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Graduate School of Social Work

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Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning

Michael Katz
University of Pennsylvania
Department of History

Katherine McFate
Joint Center for Political Studies

Raquel Ovryn Rivera
Social Science Research Council

Aida Rodriguez
Equal Opportunity Program
The Rockefeller Foundation